

# THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival  
of Religion in *Great Britain, America, &c.*

Saturday MAY 12. 1744. § N<sup>o</sup>. 63.

*The Remainder of the Account of the Reverend  
Mr. THACHER.*

**H**E had an extensive and great Concern for the pure Religion of Christ throughout the Land: and this Religion he judg'd consisted in general, in believing the divine Inspiration of the holy Scriptures; keeping close to them in all Points both of Faith, Worship, Practice and Church Order; and living in the Power of them: And agreeable thereto, in particular, chiefly in these three Things, (1.) In preaching, believing and living in the powerful Efficacy of the following Doctrines, viz. The divine Trinity: The guilty, corrupt, miserable, helpless and undone Condition of all meer Mankind by Nature, or as they come into the World thro' their Sin in Adam: The sovereign Grace and Pleasure of the divine Father in chusing any to Salvation, and sending his Son, to purchase it and his Spirit to apply it: The infinite Deity, Grace, Satisfaction and Merits of this Son of his united to our human Nature: The absolute Necessity of the Grace and Power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, awaken, convince, humble, excite and change the Hearts of Sinners, and to dwell in and help the Changed to the Exercise of all Graces and Enjoyment of true Consolations; to teach and lead them in the Paths of Truth and Righteousness, enable them to bare and improve Afflictions and Comforts, overcome Temptations, die more to Sin and Creatures, live more to God, persevere and grow in Grace to Death, and then make their Spirits perfect in Power and Holiness: God's uniting to Christ, pardoning, justifying and adopting every Soul, meerly thro' the Righteousness, Grace

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and Intercession of the Son of his Love, immediately upon its being enabled most heartily to embrace him wholly absolutely and eternally in all his Person, Excellencies, Offices and Benefits, and God in Him: and in that Act of *Adoption* God's giving to every such embracing Soul an unalienable Title to all that it embraces Christ and Him in Christ for, and even inconceivably more; viz. To the whole everlasting *Covenant of Grace*, well ordered in all Things and sure, comprehending God the *Father, Son and Spirit*, all their Glory, Excellence and Blessedness, their eternal Love and all the blessed Influences of it; all the Promises contain'd in Scripture, all the Privileges of the Sons of God, Perseverance, Heaven, eternal Life, all their Salvation and all that their enlightened Minds can eternally desire; in Fine that all our Blessedness and Salvation flow from the meer sovereign Grace of God, thro' the Mediation, Sufferings and righteous Obedience of Christ, and by the Power of the Holy Spirit, and to these alone belong the Glory. (2.) In preaching and living in the powerful Efficacy of the *vital, experimental and practical* Parts of *Piety*; with the Exercise of all the Graces and Practice of all the Duties of the Christian Life, both respecting God, and our *Neighbours* on temporal and spiritual Accounts, our *Families* and *ourselves*: abounding in fasting, praying, singing, reading, and hearing the Word of God, attending the Ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; Meditation, religious Conference, &c. (3) In preserving the *Sovereignty* of Christ, the *Purity of Worship*, and the *Liberties* of the *Brethren* in the *Churches*: and especially the *Liberty* of searching the holy Scriptures, judging for themselves and enjoying their Consciences in religious Matters; of Meeting both publickly or privately as they judge best, for religious Exercises; and of asking any able, orthodox and godly Minister of Christ to come to their Houses and discourse and pray and preach Christ in them, and of opening their Doors to all Comers. He tho't that preaching Christ and the *pure Gospel* by his Ambassadors shou'd be as free as the Air we breath in: He rejoic'd to hear of any being earnest to invite them to their Houses and of others earnest to hear their Messages. And he cou'd not see how any cou'd answer it at the great Day, for preventing, forbidding or discouraging any of Christ's Ministers from preaching *Him* to thirsty Souls, or others from going to hear *Him* preached.

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In these Things he judged the *pure Religion* of Christ consisted. And his Spirit and Principles being generally known, he was frequently called to *ecclesiastical Councils*, where he shone both in great Boldness in the Faith and great Piety, and was very serviceable. And on these and other Occasions; some of which I have been a Witness of, he discovered an excellent Talent of speaking on proper Emergencies with great Solemnity, Pertinency, Weight and Closeness to the Hearers.

He was deeply affected with every Thing that had a sad or threatening Aspect on this great Interest. Especially the publishing diverse Books and Pamphlets, misrepresenting and rendering ridiculous the wonderful Work of God which he had been an admiring Eye-Witness of, and had felt the sanctifying and joyous Influence of in his own Soul: but they too much, alas, like *Ham* and *Canaan* who view'd and told the Nakedness of *Noah* the most eminent *Preacher of Righteousness* on Earth in his Day; and heaping up Reproaches-upon those whom the sovereign God has been pleased to use as the most successful Instruments or open Encouragers of that Work of his among us, to which above a *Hundred* pious Ministers: this Land have born their public Testimony. And he lamented the Death of the Rev. and dear Mr. *Cooper* as a very great Loss and awful Frown of God upon the Land: in the Sense of which he most affectionately mourn'd from Day to Day.

For two or three Years before the late Revival in his Precinct, he was so dejected, on Account of the Unsuccessfulness of his Ministry; that every Time I went thither, he wou'd be discoursing with me about laying it down: His Hands seem'd to hang down, and his Knees feeble: and I think it was the last Time I was there, before the Revival, when he told me, "He was so near the Point, that he thought he should have taken Leave of his People before then, but that he cou'd not satisfy himself with a suitable *Text* for his farewell Sermon; apprehending that the Sovereign God might chuse to work by some other on his People." And by this Dejection, his bodily Infirmities of studying, visiting and preaching grievously prevailed on him. But when the set Time to favour *Zion* came, and her Captivity returned, he was like them that dream: then his Mouth was fill'd with Laughter and his Tongue with Singing: He had been sowing in Tears, and now he reaps in Joy: He had been going

forth weeping and bearing precious Seed, but now he comes again rejoicing, bringing his Sheaves with him.

It began as we observ'd before, in *November 1741*, at the Advance of the *Winter*, when the People us'd to be slack in coming to the publick Worship, and the Assemblies thin : But now, as he dwelt about *half a Mile* from the *House* which stood at the meeting of the five principal Roads of the Precinct ; when he came to the Top of the rising Ground in fair View of the *House* where he had shed so many Tears of Sorrow and breathed out so many heavy Sighs--- to see the People flocking in all the five Roads to the *House* of God, both Young and Old on Horseback and on Foot, in the coldest and stormiest Season, for no Weather could hinder them, to hear of Christ and praise him.--His Soul (as his Consort told me) would exceedingly exult in the View !--- how would it quicken him to make haste to join them ! how beautiful did the Feet of him whom they saw bringing glad Tydings to them then appear ! how gladly did they meet together ! It gave him such a Spring of Life and Joy as carried him quite beyond the Sense of his bodily Frailties, and he seem'd to forget 'em for a Year together ; nor cou'd he indulge them to the Time he died.

For *twenty Years* past, he seem'd continually to live in the near Views of Death and Eternity, I mean of his own approaching to them, as any that ever I knew ; as appear'd in his constant Conversation, Looks and Conduct in his House and elsewhere : And now in the more lively Prospect thereof, apprehending he was hastening to them, that this extraordinary Season of divine Effusions might quickly be over, and the Souls of the People hastening to that Eternity with him, exceeding precious ; He exerted all his Powers to improve the Time, and Concern of the People : *' Praying, Exhorting, and Preaching,* in Season and out of Season, on Lord's-Days and Others, by Day and by Night, in Publick and Private, at every Funeral or lesser Assembly of People ; and like *the Apostle*, from House to House, warning every Man and teaching every Man, that he might present every Man perfect in *Christ Jesus* ; whereto he also laboured, striving according to *his working*, who wrought mightily in him, *Acts xx. 20. Col. i. 28.*

But tho' these earnest, constant and abundant Labours quicken'd all the Springs of Life within him, and gave him

a new Vigour and Freshness; yet they wore the vital Vessels and prepar'd them for fatal Relaxations; and his raised Zeal for *Christ and Souls*, even actually consum'd him.

For on Monday Febr. 20. last, he set out for an ecclesiastical Council at *Hull*. He grew ill of a *Strangury* as he travelled thither; which the next Day so prevailed, as confin'd him; and the Council desirous of his Presence adjourn'd a while; but reviving, the Council met again, & he attended their Affairs. While he was there he also preached: and upon reading the Result on Friday; He made a solemn and pathetick Speech both to the *Aggrieved* and the *Pastor*, which drew Tears from their Eyes: and among other Things he told them, *He spake in the Views of Eternity which he apprehended to be very near him, and as a dying Person.*

Returning home not well, he usually concluded his Sermons with Intimations of the same Importance. Some time in March he kept his *Family-Fast*; took his Text from 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. and began his Discourse exactly thus, as appears in the Notes which one his Children then wrote after him, viz. *These were the last Words of David; and likely the last of the Speaker on such an Occasion: We may in them observe the sweet Frame he had, looking on his Departure &c.* The Notes are excellent and pathetick to his Family and Children then before his Eyes: but I must now omit them.

And as he apprehended his Departure near, he rather grew more laborious; preaching eight Times on the first Week in April, partly at *Middleborough* and partly at *Plimouth* sixteen Miles off, which was the last Week of his Ministry. For on Lord's Day April 8, in the Forenoon, he preach'd to his own Congregation, and in the Afternoon he closed the Subject which he had been treating on for three preceeding Lord's Days, viz. the Grace, Exercise and Duty of *Charity* or *Love* to GOD and Man, from 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 3. which he observed is a special Fruit of the *Holy Spirit*, and is peculiar to the sanctify'd; begins in Regeneration, grows with other Graces as Holiness increases, and is perfected in Heaven: and there he left his dear People, seem'd to speak as on the Borders of the heavenly World, and closed with telling them, in a very affectionate Manner, that *He knew not whether ever he should see or speak to them in this any more, &c.*

Returning Home, he told his Consort, *He didn't know but his Work was done.* The Night after, she observ'd him  
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restless and out of Order: *next Day* not well, but went Abroad: *Tuesday* seiz'd with a very painful and weakening Dysentery; which continued and increased, so that he could not go forth to the *general Fast* on *Thursday*; tho' he had been every Day before studying and writing something in Preparation for it, from those affecting Passages in *Luk. v. 34, 35.* which he carried to the *peculiar Mourning & Fasting* of *Christ's true Disciples* for the *sensible withdraw* of his *spiritual Presence*, as well as of his *humane Nature*. He went about half Way in composing his Sermon, and then was obliged to leave it. And tho' from this Time forward he was so exceeding weak, that he could scarce utter a Sentence, or bear the least Noise or Whisper; yet there being no sensible Fever, neither himself, nor those about him were aware of any particular Danger. And towards the End of the following Week, when the Apprehension of Danger arose, after some Buffetings of Satan, he gain'd the Victory: but was only able in some short Intervals and broken Expressions to signify his Faith and Assurance, and bear his Testimony to the Truths he had preached and the Work of GOD. His animal Spirits so failed and therewith his Memory, that when he began a Sentence, he lost the Idea: and 'tis likely the *Liquid Laudanum* might be the principal Cause of this. In the Night after *Lord's Day April 22*, about half an Hour after eleven, he expired, to the great Lamentation of his own dear Flock, and Multitudes of other pious People, both in this and the neighbouring Governments.

On *Wednesday* in the Afternoon was such an extraordinary Confluence from the neighbouring Towns, as was never seen in the Place before, to attend his Funeral. When the Coffin was carried out, there was great Weeping: and his Countenance not being changed, but looking only as if he lay in a pleasant Sleep, the Door lay open a considerable Time, and great Numbers crowded to view it. The Rev. Mr. *Leonard* prayed at the Door of the House: and then the Corpse being carried to the Door of the Church the Multitude fill'd it, nor cou'd they all get in: the Rev. Mr. *Perkins* began with Prayer; and I preach'd from *2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.* and concluded with a Prayer and Blessing: When we came out, the Door of the Coffin was open'd, and many must see him again: When set on the Edge of the Grave, it lay there some Time, and they seem'd to be loth to let him down: nor did I ever see  
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so many Weepers before. When let into the Grave, one of the Brethren weeping and looking into it said --- ' *There lies the Body of our dear Pastor !* Another said --- ' *Now he knows in his Soul the Blessedness he spake of to us !* A Minister said --- *and how gloriously shall this Body rise up out of this Grave again, &c.*

At the Desire of the eldest Deacon in the Name of the Church, I stay'd and preach'd on the *next Lord's Day*, in the Forenoon, from *John v. 35.* and in the Afternoon from *1 Thes. ii. 19, 20.*

Thus have I offer'd a brief Account of this eminent Minister, whom I have often thought much like to *Elijah* the Prophet : who tho' a *Man subject to like Passions as we are ;* Jam. v. 17. yet as the Son of Sirah says, *He stood up as Fire, and his Word burnt like a Lamp, &c.* And may the GOD of the Spirits of all Flesh quickly raise up many in the Spirit and Power of *Elijah*, before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the LORD, and turn the Hearts of the Fathers to the Children, and the Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just, and make ready a People prepared for the LORD.

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*The Publisher of the Christian History having desired of the Rev. Mr. Thacher to give a particular Account of the Revival of Religion in his Precinct ; waited for the said Account 'till the End of the last Year : And then not receiving any, he published in Numb. 52, being the last for the Year, a Letter from Mr. Thacher to Mr. Prince dated Dec. 21. 1741. But finding among his Papers since his Decease the Beginning of the designed Account ; it may be acceptable to the Reader to publish it, for the sake of some new Things in it, which were not mention'd in the abovesaid Letter.*

*The Rev. Mr. THACHER's Account of the Revival of Religion at MIDDLEBOROUGH East-Precinct.*

*Rev. and dear Sir,*

THE Design of the *Christian History* seems agreeable to the ancient Spirit of the truly godly : *Psal. 78. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 :* And tends to strengthen the Hands that hang down, and the Hearts that are fainting, on viewing the Unsuccessfulness of the Gospel on the Hearts of Men.----I wish my Ability and  
Leisure,

Leisure, would allow me to contribute at all hereunto. -----  
I dare not conceal, what the LORD hath been doing with  
and for this People of the *first Precinct* in *Middleborough*.

It had been a long Time of Deadness ; no Stirrings of the  
SPIRIT attending the *Word* in Public, or private Application ;  
the Prayerless were prayerless still ; the Drunkard & envious  
Man went on frowardly in their Way : (a) Many inward  
Reflections and Searchings of Heart after the Cause hereof :  
thither I turned, and oft almost resolved that *I would speak no  
more in the Name of the LORD* : for some Months before the  
Rev. Mr. Tennent came by us, I had fixed the Time of taking  
my Farewell of that dear Flock with whom I had been almost  
*thirty-four Years*.-----At this Juncture, that *Man of GOD*  
came among us. Against his Person and Ministry, I found  
sensible Prejudice, from the Reports of him which had reach'd  
me : I rode *six Miles* out of Town to meet with him in his  
Way from *Plymouth* to the Rev. Mr. Campbell's Parish. I de-  
sire to bless GOD for that Sermon, which was from *Luke. 15.*  
*On the Prodigal*. I never saw more of the Presence of GOD  
with any in Prayer (b) and Preaching, and never felt more of  
the Power accompanying the Word on my Heart. Every  
Word made its own Way : I felt the Weight of it. This  
revived in me the Ministry I sat under in my Youth.

Mr. Tennent preach'd *that Evening* in my *Pulpit*, from *Ram.*  
*2. 9.* He complain'd that he never was so shut up but  
once ; tho' I suppose none were sensible of it : This added  
greatly Terror and Discouragement to me ; fearing the LORD  
had shut up his tender Mercies from me and this People ;  
yea, that GOD had said, *Pray not for this People*. I laid my  
Case freely open to Mr. Tennent, and my Discourage-  
ments in the Ministry : who seem'd tenderly affected ; yet  
on parting had such a Word as this, *oft' times 'tis darkest a  
little before Day, the rising Sun will bring Light*.----The As-  
sembly with us was small : no visible Effect ; yet from that  
Day my People were more inclined to hear.

(*The Remainder in our next.*)

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- (a) The *Author* not living to finish or revise this Letter, here  
and in some other Places seem to be a *Word or two wanting*.  
(b) The Rev. *Author* told the Rev. Mr. Prince that ' Tho'  
' he went with sensible Prejudice ; yet by that Time Mr.  
' Tennent had delivered three Sentences in his first Prayer,  
' he found him to be a *Man of GOD*, and his Prejudice  
' quickly vanish'd away.